

JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON.

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(WILKINSON)



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JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON.



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JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

BY

C. TH. ODMER.

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HUNTINGDON VALLEY, PA.

1901.

(2)

BZP (Wilkinson)

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James John Garth Wilkinson.

THE name of James John Garth Wilkinson is carved deeply upon the annals of the New Church by uses manifold and great. For more than sixty years he was among the foremost of those who have carried the literary standards of the New Jerusalem, and stood eminent alike as a biographer of Swedenborg, as an editor and translator of the Theological Writings, and as a philosophical expounder of the Doctrines of the New Church. But the distinct mission of his life, the use in which he stood pre-eminent, nay unique, was not in the purely theological domain but in the untrodden field of New Church Science. Here he looms in the dawn of New Church history as the first scientist of the Church, as the pioneer who first discovered and made known the magnificent system of natural truth which for a century had lain hidden in the scientific and philosophical works of Emanuel Swedenborg. The first translator, editor, and commentator of these works—as such his name will be immortal in the endless history of that Church which is to pave a highway between Egypt, Assyria and Israel.

Dr. Wilkinson stands unique also as the only professed New-Churchman in the nineteenth century whose name and voice reached widely into the literary and scientific world, and as such he has effected more perhaps than any other single member of the Church in making known the name of Swedenborg and the existence and the general character of the new Revelation. This fame rests in the first instance upon the enthusiastic references made to him by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who characterized Dr. Wilkinson as —“a philosophic critic with a coequal vigor of understanding and imagination comparable only to Lord Bacon’s, who has restored his master’s, [Swedenborg’s] buried books to the day, and transferred them, with every advantage, from their

forgotten Latin into English, to go round the world in our commercial and conquering tongue. . . . The admirable preliminary discourses with which Mr. Wilkinson has enriched these volumes, throw all the contemporary philosophy of England into shade, and leave me nothing to say on their proper ground." (Emerson's Essay on Swedenborg, in *Representative Men*.)

And in his volume on *English Traits*, in 1856, Emerson again refers to Dr. Wilkinson in his usual exaggerated style:

"Wilkinson, the editor of Swedenborg, the annotator of Fourier and the champion of Hahnemann, has brought to metaphysics and to physiology a native vigor, with a catholic perception of relations, equal to the highest attempts, and a rhetoric like the armory of the invincible knights of old. There is in the action of his mind a long Atlantic roll, not known except in deepest waters, and only lacking what ought to accompany such powers, a manifest centrality."

Such notices, and the personal friendship and admiration which he gained among other eminent contemporaries, for a time proved a delusion and a snare to Dr. Wilkinson by awakening with him and others the hope that through such means the light of the Heavenly Doctrines might be brought into the Egyptian darkness of the learned world. This missionary hope is evident in most of his works and has considerably weakened their usefulness to those who alone were willing or able to appreciate. The learned world paid no serious attention to his teachings. Ephraim remained "wedded to his idols," and Dr. Wilkinson finally came to recognize the unteachable condition of the learned as a class. The members of the New Church remained from the beginning to the end his one appreciative public.

An interview with Dr. Wilkinson was ever a rich feast to a New-Churchman visiting London. His home ever since his marriage in 1840 was in the northern part of the city, at 4 Finchley Road, St. John's Wood, a quiet, pleasant neighborhood with a sphere of culture and refinement. Our venerable friend himself, when the present writer had the privilege of meeting him, was in his eighty-third year, a distinguished old gentleman, hoary and of heroic stature, erect and powerful like some ancient viking, but with the spirit of a youth and the heart of a child. A sweet

geniality beamed through his eyes; the old-world courtesy of his greeting, the sympathetic grasp of his hand, and his conversation—lively, suggestive, sparkling and free,—quickly established familiar relations between host and visitor.

What visions were called up in the presence of this faithful old champion of the truth! Visions of the childhood of our beloved Church, the days of the "thirties" and "forties," the intellectual labors of Noble and Mason and Smithson, of Spurgin, Clissold, Rich and Strutt: the bold aspirations and unfulfilled hopes of that little band of explorers who had discovered a very ocean of truth in Swedenborg's philosophical works, and who labored so earnestly to convince the world that the new waters were other than some deserted and mossy old mill-pond. But there were visions also of that future day when the work of these men will have reached an unexpected fruition, when at least the members of the New Church will have become fully convinced of the discovery; when hearts will be found willing and minds able to set out anew upon the unknown sea to reach, beyond, the land from which the Church is to "feed the nations with a rod of iron."

That day is distant still, but here was Dr. Wilkinson, the living monument of the discovery, himself the leader of the young explorers and the first to cry out in joy "*He thalatta, He thalatta.*" (For the Doctor spoke in the Attic dialect, pure Athenian English, the dew of Hymettos well seasoned with the classic salt.) And now though he is gone, who was the last survivor of his brave comrades, he still is here, and any one can still have the pleasure of an hour's conversation with his spirit,—for he wrote just as he talked, vigorously, affectionately, instructively.

The most striking characteristic of Dr. Wilkinson's mind was his intense devotion to the truth for its own sake. The witness of this love is the relative obscurity in which he chose to live and die. The love of this world and its glory must have offered many a sore temptation to a man of his genius, attainments and instincts. The friend and associate of Dickens, Oliphant, Tennyson and Ruskin, admired by Carlyle and flattered by Emerson, what a career could have been his had he been willing to compromise his principles or betray his highest ideals. But though the glamor of the literary world long continued to possess a certain fascination for him, yet he never concealed the more unpopular elements

of his faith, but continued to the end the uncompromising Swedenborgian scientist and New Church knight of the pen, without fear or reproach.

With a manly honesty he never claimed for himself the honor of any of the grand principles which he expounded, but ever pointed with gratitude to his master, Swedenborg. And as he advanced in years he came to recognize and proclaim more and more clearly the Divine source of Swedenborg's inspiration.

And yet, though claiming no originality, he certainly was one of the most original minds in the history of the New Church. His works fairly bristle and scintillate with fresh and unexpected thoughts and suggestions, with new puttings and applications of the Doctrines in the fields of natural science, political economy, history, and philosophy. Rapid, versatile, inexhaustible, he carries his readers into ever new regions. Now they are with him on some mountain top, enjoying grand perspectives of worlds and eons, now wandering peacefully in fields of quiet meditation, and now invading the dark abysses of human error where he is giving valiant battle to the monsters of modern infidelity, learned insanity and scientific cruelty.

He had, of course, his faults and limitations. One of his weaknesses as a writer was the result, apparently, of a superabundant and embarrassing wealth of expression. One of his personal friends has said of him,—“A trouble with Dr. Wilkinson is his extraordinary knowledge of *words*. Apparently, his urgent eagerness to utter them sometimes causes them to tumble over each other.” But a more serious fault than this is the lack of methodical arrangement and the diffusiveness from which most of his works suffer. He sometimes dives into a subject at the middle instead of the beginning, and when tired comes out of it again, leaving the reader in perplexity as to the conclusion. His thoughts are often too rapid to follow with convenience: his imagination is too lively and his mind too ardent and poetical to be strictly logical; and his arguments now and again are more bold and dashing than well-digested and convincing. His style is much affected by the mystic, oracular notes of the old Icelandic Sagas which he loved so well, and his latest works are especially obscured with an hierophantic but pathetic mist.

But all these faults may readily be forgiven for the great love which inspired him and the great use he has performed. This love gave him no rest and impelled him to labor unceasingly with an energy and industry which appear the more admirable from the fact that most of his literary work was accomplished in the midst of the arduous duties of his medical practice. His life was given to the service of the truth, and he labored joyfully, faithfully, and well.

James John Garth Wilkinson was born in London, June 3d, 1812. His father, James John Wilkinson, was a well-known barrister of Gray's Inn, and finally a judge of the County Palatine of Durham. His mother, *nee* Harriet Robinson, came of a family which had been associated with the history of the New Church from its very beginning, her father, George Robinson, having been one of the twelve men in London who, on June 1st, 1788, ordained the first ministers of the distinctive organization of the Church. Her brother, George B. Robinson, was one of the earliest members and most earnest supporters of the Swedenborg Society, and it was from this uncle that Dr. Wilkinson received his first knowledge of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem.

After a careful classical education the subject of our sketch began his study for the medical profession at Newcastle in 1828. Six years afterwards he was admitted as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and began the practice of medicine in London.

The year 1837 proved a most important turning-point in the spiritual and professional life of the young physician, then twenty-five years of age. He now became convinced concerning the genuine Law of Cure which had been promulgated by Samuel Hahnemann. The Science of Homœopathy was at this time in its very infancy, and its principles were then, as indeed they are still—though with some modification—decidedly unpopular in England, and it required no ordinary courage to turn from the Old School to the New; professional ostracism and persecution would seem sure to follow, but we know not any particulars as to this in Dr. Wilkinson's case. In time he built up a large and successful practice and rose to eminence in his use as one of the most prominent Homœopathists in England; members of the aristocracy sought his services, and the duke of Northumberland is known as one of his patients.

In the same year, (1837), our young savant embraced also those laws of Spiritual Cure which had been revealed to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg. Almost against his will he was constrained to admit their rational beauty and self-evident truth; but when once convinced he received them enthusiastically, sold all his theological belongings and purchased the precious Pearl of the Heavenly Doctrine.

And now began his long career as an active member of the New Church,—for as such we must acknowledge him, although he never formally connected himself with the distinctive organization of the Church. His reason for remaining nominally in the Established Church is unknown to us, but he never attacked the outward organization, as has been done by so many other “non-separatists.” In his reception of the new faith there was no reservation, and he always mingled freely with his co-religionists, associating and co-operating with them on the social plane and in the literary uses of the Church. The special field of his activity in this respect was the Swedenborg Society, then known as the “London Printing Society,” which had been instituted in the year 1810 for the purpose of “printing and publishing the Theological Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg.” This body had long been the common meeting-ground for all classes of those who had accepted the Doctrines of the New Church, and remains to this day the most efficient instrument in this world for the dissemination of the inspired works in and through which the Lord has effected His Second Coming.

Dr. Wilkinson became a subscribing member of this institution in 1837, and was elected a member of the governing “Committee” at the annual meeting of the society, on June 19, 1839. He was soon afterwards appointed the first librarian of the society, and his active mind seems to have inspired at once a new life and quality in the body. A bolder front was now shown towards the outer world, and the operations assumed a more literary aspect and greater proportions than before. Dr. Wilkinson remained a member of the “Committee” until 1857, when he left it for reasons which will be explained hereafter. But in 1875 he returned to his old allegiance, and in 1886 he became a “life-member” of the body.

At the meeting in 1839 the Rev. Manoah Sibly presented to the society several manuscript copies of minor works by Swedenborg, which after an adventurous history had come into his possession, and which never had appeared in any printed form. These were now placed in the hands of Dr. Wilkinson, who in the same year brought out for the Swedenborg Society the first English translation of *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning Charity*, and in the following year an edition of the same work in the original Latin. In the preface to the English version the translator made a vigorous plea for the preservation and publication of the remaining manuscripts of Swedenborg, and he thus gave the first impetus to the movement which was continued, through various stages, by Dr. Immanuel Tafel, and Dr. R. L. Tafel, and which is still going on in the present work of reproducing the manuscript of the *Spiritual Diary*. Dr. Wilkinson himself continued his editorial labor by bringing out the first editions of *Canones Novae Ecclesiae* and *De Domino et Athanasii Symbolo*, both of which were published in London, in 1840.

In the year 1839 Dr. Wilkinson began also to make a name for himself in the literary world at large by the preface which he wrote for his new edition of the then almost forgotten *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, by William Blake. This volume had been published, originally, in 1787, at the suggestion of John Flaxman, Blake's intimate friend and patron, through whom the poet received the ideas of New Church principles which appear in hazy manner in his works. The lively imagination, grand themes and symbolical language of Blake proclaimed him a kindred spirit to Dr. Wilkinson, who was the first that called public attention to Blake's real merits as a lyric poet.

But simultaneously with this literary "find," the Doctor discovered another volume of neglected "poetry," a volume forgotten nearly a hundred years,—poetry far more sublime than William Blake's, the poetry of genuine truth concerning the body and the mind of man. Swedenborg's *Regnum Animale* came to his notice, and here our young physician "met his fate," in the shape of that cause to which he was to devote the best energies of his life. It was a case of love at first sight, and he entered at once upon his service by beginning, in October, 1839, his translation of this

crowning work of Swedenborg's physiological and philosophical career.

Dr. Wilkinson was now fairly launched upon his professional career. Having received the Doctrines of the New Church, and having entered upon the distinguishing use of his life, his young manhood was crowned and his many blessings completed by his union with the partner of his life, Emma A. Marsh, who, from her wedding in 1840 to her death in 1886, remained not only his loving companion but also an intelligent sympathizer in his faith and work. She was herself a woman of literary tastes and ability, and has enriched the literature of the Church by her translation of Baron Frederic de Portal's scholarly and fascinating work, *Des Couleurs Symboliques*. She also, in the course of time, presented to her husband four original and living volumes,—one son and three daughters.

The life of Dr. Wilkinson is henceforth very much like that of any other profound student and diligent writer—the quiet life of the study. No thrilling adventures nor world-stirring deeds have been recorded, and but few external incidents afford a frame to the picture of his intellectual career. Our sketch must therefore be confined, almost exclusively, to the simple account of his literary labors.

In 1839 he entered, as stated, on the translation of Swedenborg's scientific works, at the same time seizing every opportunity for preparing the public and creating a receptive audience for what was to come. For this purpose he utilized the various literary magazines,—where his contributions were always welcomed,—and thus, incidentally, did excellent service for the Church. One of his articles on the works of Swedenborg was published in the *London True Sun*, of 1839, and was immediately reproduced in the *Corsair* of New York. Another, on "Coleridge's Comments on Swedenborg," was published in the *London Monthly Magazine*, in 1840, and attracted wide attention in the literary world. It gained him the friendship of that brilliant but erratic philosopher, Henry James, Sr., who to a considerable extent "patronized" Swedenborg. The interesting correspondence between these two *literati* led to the publication of Henry James' celebrated work, *Christianity the Logic of Creation*.

More important than these is the account of "Swedenborg and the Swedenborgians," which Dr. Wilkinson, in 1842, contributed to the *Penny Encyclopaedia*, an immensely popular work, edited by George Lang and published by the "Society for the diffusion of Useful Knowledge." While Swedenborg and the New Church had long before this figured in encyclopaedic works yet this was the first time that the subject had been presented in an unprejudiced manner and by one who was at all acquainted with it; moreover, the article was distinctly original as the first attempt ever made to give a rational analysis of Swedenborg's scientific works and philosophical principles. The *Penny Encyclopaedia*, with its circulation of twenty-five thousand copies, thus became a powerful medium for the wide "diffusion" of correct and hence "useful knowledge" concerning the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of the Christian Church. It is a pity that all subsequent encyclopaedias have not availed themselves of this material in their accounts of Swedenborg, thereby forestalling much false testimony and ludicrous nonsense. This article was hailed with enthusiasm by the members of the New Church throughout the world. It was re-published as a telling tract, both in England and in America. M. Le Boys des Guays translated it into French, and Professor Immanuel Tafel, of Tübingen, published it in German, in true Teutonic style, with copious notes and voluminous additional documents.

Dr. Wilkinson about this time began a long-continued series of "Letters" to the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, of Boston, describing the condition and progress of the New Church in England, and especially the doings of the Swedenborg Society. This body had now secured those manuscripts of Swedenborg which, at various times between 1788 and 1790, had been carried to England by Augustus Nordenskjöld and Charles B. Wadström, in the hope of finding a publisher in London. Disappointed in this, these Swedish gentlemen, before setting out on their fatal African explorations, had deposited the precious manuscripts, (among which was the *Diarium Spirituale*) with Mr. Benedict Chastanier, who in his old age and distress pawned them to two or three other persons. Finally, in 1841, a watchful Providence gave them into the safekeeping of the Swedenborg Society. Dr. Wilkinson, as librarian, now began to investigate their history, and before long

discovered that they had been borrowed, originally, from the Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, and that this body, therefore, was the rightful owner. A long correspondence ensued between Dr. Wilkinson and Baron Berzelius, the immortal "father of modern chemistry," who at this time acted as secretary to the "Swedish Parnassus." The Academy's ownership of the Manuscripts was cheerfully acknowledged by the Swedenborg Society, and permission was secured to have them copied and published by Prof. Tafel before their final return to Stockholm. The Swedish government, in recognition of the sincerity and courtesy of the Swedenborg Society, and of the services of Dr. Wilkinson in this affair, directed Count Bjornstjerna, the ambassador to the court of St. James, to wait upon the doctor in order to convey the thanks of the Academy of Sciences. The distinguished visitor was received on October 21, 1843.

In the same year, Dr. Wilkinson, with the financial assistance of Rev. Augustus Clissold and some other friends, published the first volume of his translation of *The Animal Kingdom, considered Anatomically, Physically, and Philosophically; by Emanuel Swedenborg*. The translator, in his extended and highly valuable "Introductory Remarks," prepares the reader for an intelligent appreciation of the work itself, by a summary presentation of those general philosophical doctrines which Swedenborg had developed in his preceding works, the *Principia* and the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, that is, his unique and universal doctrines of Forms, of Order and Degrees, of Series and Society, of Influx, Correspondence, Representation and Modification.

The second volume of this monumental work,—which we will not attempt to describe in this brief sketch,—was published in the year 1844, and is enriched by the translator's index to the whole work, together with a biographical and bibliographical index of all the anatomical authors quoted by Swedenborg. An American reprint of the work was published at St. Clairsville, Ohio, in 1850, and a second edition was printed at Cincinnati, in 1858. Since that time, this the most mature and valuable of Swedenborg's scientific works, has remained "out of the market" and procurable only from second-hand booksellers!

The appearance of the *Animal Kingdom* created quite a sensation in the learned world, as may be evident, for instance, from

the following extract from the review in the London *Forceps* for November, 1844:

"This is the most remarkable theory of the human body that has ever fallen into our hands; and by Emanuel Swedenborg, too!—a man whom we had always been taught to regard as either a fool, a madman, or an impostor, or perhaps an undefinable compound of all three. Wonders, it seems, never *will* cease, and therefore it were better henceforth to look out for them, and accept them whenever they present themselves, and make them into ordinary things in that way. For thereby we may be saved from making wonderful asses of ourselves and our craft, for enlightened posterity to laugh at."

Not less enthusiastic was the reviewer in *The Monthly Review*: "If the mode of reasoning and explanation adopted by Swedenborg be once understood, the anatomist and physiologist will acquire more information, and obtain a more comprehensive view of the human body and its relation to a higher sphere, than from any single book ever published; nay, we may add, than from all the books which have ever been written (especially in modern times), on physiology, or as it has been lately named, transcendental anatomy."

Encouraged by the rather unexpected interest with which this publication had been greeted, both within and without the New Church, (the entire edition of the first volume was exhausted before the second volume had appeared),—Dr. Wilkinson and his fellow-laborers and sympathizers now organized the "Swedenborg Association," for the distinct purpose of furthering the translation, publication, and distribution of Swedenborg's scientific and philosophical works. This body was rendered necessary from the fact that the "Swedenborg Society," instituted in 1810, was at this time prevented, both constitutionally and financially, from publishing any but Swedenborg's *theological* Writings.

The new "Association" was organized at London, on January 16, 1845, with the Rev. Augustus Clissold as president, and Dr. Wilkinson as secretary. Among the other members we may mention Dr. Spurgin, Dr. Strutt, Dr. Allen, Dr. Stocker, Elihu Rich, Henry Bateman, Henry Butler, R. N. Wornum, William Newberry, Rev. T. C. Shaw and L. S. Coxe,—names prominent in the history of the New Church.

The "Swedenborg Association" created a great deal of interest among the more learned and intellectual of the members of the New Church, especially in the United States, where branch-associations were established. Considering its paucity in membership and financial resources, its activity and devotion are truly remarkable. Under its auspices were published nearly all of the scientific works of Swedenborg that have appeared during the Nineteenth Century, and yet its career extended only over a period of seven years. In all, twelve different works were published; eight of these were translations into English and four were Latin editions from the original manuscripts. Dr. Wilkinson himself translated four of the works, and was the editor of all the publications, with the exception of two volumes edited by Prof. Tafel.

The aims of the Association were not limited to the *publication* of these works, but the members looked forward to the development of a general system of true scientific principles, upon which might be based a genuine New Church Education. The need of such principles is well expressed by Dr. Wilkinson in a letter to America, dated February 3, 1845:

"If we are ever to have New Church Schools, for children and adults, (and who would not be a scholar throughout his life?), these works must be the present fountain, from which teachers and taught alike shall draw their principles. . . . The present scientifics may be likened to vast heaps of stones, which the learned, wonderful to say, digest after a fashion. The idea they have of feeding the public,—of "diffusing useful knowledge"—is no other than reducing these stones to powder, and strewing them around in small quantities, and at a cheap rate. But such materials have an affinity for the bones only, and can only nourish the bones, and the consequence is that the scientific world is more like a great overgrown skeleton, than a human body. Now what *we* want to do is to feed upon the *order* of ultimates, and not upon the earthly substance, to eat mentally the resulting animal and vegetable kingdoms, which are the reason for the mineral kingdom, in order that our blood and softer solids may come into existence, and hold the reins and wield the destinies of the natural body, civil, political and social. But by what other system are we introduced to organic ideas of creation? by what

other system are we led to feed upon its prevailing order, than by the views vouchsafed to Swedenborg?" (*New Jerusalem Magazine*, April, 1845.)

Dr. Wilkinson himself makes a first brave attempt toward an original application of Swedenborg's universal doctrine of Use, in the brief but brilliant essay on *The Grouping of Animals*, which he read before the Veterinary Medical Association, of London, in 1845. In his re-arrangement of zoological classification he here makes man the centre of creation and groups all animal creation around him, not according to mere external similarity of form or anatomical structure, but according to the degree of excellence of the uses which the various animals perform to man. Hence instead of the ape, the horse is placed next to man, and then the other domestic animals; after which follow the wild beasts, all according to the degrees and series of their uses to man. A bold attempt this, but one which will be honored by the New Church zoologists of the distant future!

The first-fruit of the Swedenborg Association was the two noble volumes on the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, (London, 1845 and 1846), translated by Rev. Augustus Clissold, and edited and indexed by Dr. Wilkinson, who also furnished a small volume of masterly "Introductory Remarks." These, together with his "Introductory Remarks to the Animal Kingdom," remain to this day the most thorough Analysis of Swedenborg's philosophical principles that has ever been attempted; in lucidity of thought and beauty of expression, they are probably the very best that have flowed from Dr. Wilkinson's pen. They should, by all means, be republished and circulated widely throughout the New Church, as the best possible means of re-kindling the interest in these works of Swedenborg's.

The year 1846 witnessed the publication of Swedenborg's *Principia, or the First Principles of Natural Things, being new Attempts toward a philosophical Explanation of the Elementary World*, a work which is the foundation stone as well as the portal to the entire structure of Swedenborg's scientific system. It was translated by Rev. Augustus Clissold and edited by Dr. Wilkinson, who in the same year brought forth the *Opuscula quaedam Argumenti Philosophici*, a collection of brief scientific, philosophical and semi-theological treatises by Swedenborg. They

were translated and published in English, by Dr. Wilkinson, in 1847, under the collective title of *Posthumous Tracts*, and treat of such subjects as "a way to the knowledge of the soul," "faith and good works," "the red blood," "the animal spirits," "sensation," "action," etc.

The culmination of Dr. Wilkinson's activity as the translator and editor of Swedenborg's scientific works, was reached in the year 1847, when his industrious pen produced—

1. A Latin edition of Swedenborg's *Introduction to a Rational Psychology*, treating of the fibre, the arachnoid tunic, and the diseases of the fibres, and published by the editor as *Oeconomia Regni Animalis. Transactio Tertia*. This has not yet appeared in English, with the exception of the part on the "Diseases of the Fibres," which was published in *New Church Life* for 1897, '98.

2. The *Posthumous Tracts*, noted above.

3. A new translation of the work on *The Infinite and the final cause of Creation*. To this edition Dr. Wilkinson furnished, also, a valuable preface, controverting the transcendental philosophers in his usual bright and convincing manner. The work was reviewed at length in *The Harbinger*, of New York, and thus attracted the notice of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who now opened a friendly correspondence with Dr. Wilkinson.

4. A new translation of Swedenborg's *Hieroglyphic Key to natural and spiritual mysteries by way of Representations and Correspondences*.

Besides these, Dr. Wilkinson in the same year appeared with two original productions in the form of popular essays on the principles for which he labored so zealously. The first of these is entitled *A Popular Sketch of Swedenborg's Philosophical Works*, an eloquent and comprehensive dissertation, which brings the apparently abstruse and difficult philosophy of Swedenborg within the easy grasp of the average reader. In the second essay, *Science for All*, the writer applies the general scientific principles and philosophical doctrines of Swedenborg to the subject of Science as a whole, and shows that by these principles alone can there be effected any genuine reconciliation between Religion and Science, while at the same time by them alone can all the various

sciences be harmonized, unified, and rendered truly comprehensible and adapted to all kinds and conditions of men.

These essays were published both at London and New York, as Nos. 2 and 3 of a series of "*Tracts for the New Times*." The appearance of Dr. Wilkinson in this series led to a rupture between him and his friends in the organized New Church in America, as it seemed to them to countenance and endorse the first of these "Tracts," *Letters to a Swedenborgian*, by Henry James, in which this atrabilious writer attacks the New Church with excessive rancor and violence. The *New Jerusalem Magazine* took the Doctor to task for thus associating with an open enemy. The accused considered this an infringement on his liberty and personal friendships, and broke off his relations with the American journal.

Dr. Wilkinson now entered on an extensive foreign journey, in company with his friend, Lord Wallscourt. He was in Paris during the revolution of 1848, witnessed the bloody combats on the barricades and was kept in the city for some months, virtually a prisoner. He afterwards visited Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, and finally the United States, for the institutions of which he conceived a rather passionate dislike, though he always remained exceedingly fond of Americans.

After a brief period of rest Dr. Wilkinson resumed his literary labors in 1849, and now as the biographer of his great master, Swedenborg. Before this time there had appeared but one extended account of the life and work of Emanuel Swedenborg,—that of Nathaniel Hobart, of Boston,—an excellent work as a first attempt, and written in the spirit of a sincere believer in the Doctrines of the New Jerusalem. It is lacking, however, in an intelligent appreciation of Swedenborg as a scientist and philosopher, a pardonable fault, since the writer did not, and could not have, free access to the earlier works of the great Swede. Dr. Wilkinson was the first New Churchman who was able to supply this want, prepared as he had been by ten years of study, translating and editing. In his new work, *Emanuel Swedenborg. A Biography*, (London and Boston, 1849), he now gave the fruits of his investigations to the world. According to a later biographer of Swedenborg, the Janus-faced historian William White, this was "a work which, alike for its artistic excellence as

a biography and the originality and poetic beauty of its thoughts, has no equal in the English language."

It needs not to challenge this eulogy, to say—that the book still leaves much to be desired, especially from a theological point of view. In his anxiety to avoid the appearance of partisanship or sectarianism and thus to secure a more attentive audience in the outside world, Dr. Wilkinson in this work seems to descend somewhat from the loftier region of faith, assuming more the tone of a friendly but somewhat flippant and semi-sceptical man of the world than that of a devout New Churchman. This radical defect was remedied, long afterwards, in the second, enlarged and revised edition which was published in London, in 1886. The first edition can be recommended only as the best account of Swedenborg the scientist and philosopher, that had appeared up to that time.

Though less known or appreciated in the New Church, his next work is of far greater merits than the biography of Swedenborg, which, as the author confesses, was written in too great haste. But in his volume on *The Human Body and its Connexion with Man*, (London, 1851), the Doctor gave forth the crowning work of his life. Strange as it may seem, this work was noticed in but one of the contemporary journals of the Church, the *New Church Repository*, of New York, where it was handled in a rather pedantic manner by the learned Professor Bush. It has been referred to, in later times, as "a prose-poem of singular beauty and power," but this characterization does justice only to the *form* of this master-piece of genius and true philosophic thought. The merits of the style are indeed such as almost to obscure the more internal and substantial value of the work itself, being perhaps too eloquent, too brilliant, playful and poetical for the profound and serious thoughts which the author sought to express. The work is essentially an epitome and popular adaptation of Swedenborg's works, the *Economy*, and the *Animal Kingdom*, inspired by these throughout, yet distinctly original in its application to all sorts of modern issues in the worlds of science and of social economy. Each of the seven chapters of the book is a complete and systematic treatise on the subjects of the Brain, the Lungs, the Organs of Assimilation, the Heart, the Skin, the Human Form,

and Health. It would be impossible to particularize in this brief sketch, or to describe, as they deserve, the originality, the rich humour, the strong common sense, the philanthropic sympathy, the devout faith and the courageous spirit, which breathe from every page of this remarkable book. It truly teems with new ideas, luminous thoughts, and pregnant suggestions. We will simply have to content ourselves with recommending it *to be read*, as an introducer to the grand arcana of the human fabric.

Nevertheless, to vouch for the correctness of everything which the Doctor puts forth in this volume, would be rather unsafe, for he says so many things. His sympathies, at this period, were too broad, and his imagination was too lively, to enlist entire confidence in all his conclusions. His views on the phenomena of mesmerism and hypnotism, for instance, will have to be entirely rejected, as they were by the author himself in later years. They proved to him an *ignis fatuus* which led him for a time into the marshes and quicksands of spiritism. He fortunately regained his senses, after long years of spiritual prostration, and emerged a chastened and humbled man, but wiser and safer than before.

In the year 1852 Dr. Wilkinson brought to a close his labors as translator of Swedenborg's scientific works, when his version of the volume on *The Generative Organs* appeared in London. Though published, nominally, by the "Swedenborg Association," it was printed at the sole expense of Joseph Senior, Esq., of Dalton, the Association at this time having become virtually defunct, without leaving as much as an obituary behind it.

This volume takes a place among the works of Swedenborg the scientist exactly corresponding to that of *Conjugal Love* among the Theological Writings of Swedenborg the revelator. It fits the latter as the glove fits the hand, presenting the natural truth on this sublime subject, of which *Conjugal Love* reveals the spiritual counterpart. In this physiological work Swedenborg, in facts, comes marvelously near the genuine doctrine concerning the spiritual relations between man and woman, and restores the very expression "conjugal" from obsolete antiquity. It is a pity that Dr. Wilkinson did not follow the author in the use of this term which so well expresses the exalted idea of "conjunction," but adopted instead the more common term "conjugal,"

which describes, etymologically, a marital "yoking together" as of two beasts of burden.

The translation as a whole is nevertheless an excellent one, and can be republished without much revision. Such republication is greatly needed, for the work is one that should be placed into the hands of every young man about to enter the married state. As expressed by the translator in his brief "advertisement:"

"It is a delicate subject which the present treatise embraces, but it is one which cannot be unknown. When we are little boys and girls, our first queries about our *whence* are answered by the authoritative dogma of 'the silver spade:' we were dug up by that implement. By degrees the fact comes forth. The public, however, remains for ages in the silver-spade condition of mind with regard to the science of the fact; and the doctors foster it by telling us that the whole subject is a medical property. Swedenborg wants to tell us on the other hand all about these mysteries; and we suppose the time has come when we may begin to know. There is nothing wrong in the knowing; and though the passions may be stimulated in the first moments by such information, yet in the second instance they will be calmed by it; and ceasing to be inflamed by the additional goad of curiosity and imagination, they will cool down under the hydropathic influences of science. Well stated knowledge did never yet contribute to human inflammation."

Light alone can dispel the prevailing fearful ignorance on this holy subject. Light alone can be victorious over the demons of lasciviousness who refrain not from invading even the marriage relation. Such light is given here, truth scientific, moral, pure and poetical, in striking contrast with the countless inane if not insane volumes which, under the cover of privacy, profess to instruct young men on a subject which has been kept away from them by parents and teachers alike. What a crime! to withhold this most important knowledge from the future progenitors of the race; to allow them to enter the nuptial chamber filled, only too probably, with vain and unholy phantasies—with scraps of knowledge picked up from among the filth of the streets or from the vendors of forbidden literature. "First states enter into all succeeding ones," and the ignorance or wrong knowledge of the newly married man can be dispelled only by years of sad experience, to the detriment, and often to the destruction, of true conjugal love.

But as for those members of the New Church who as youths have studied this grand work of Swedenborg's, and who in their married life have experienced the blessings of the light therein bestowed, the present writer cannot adequately express the depth of obligation under which Dr. Wilkinson has placed them by his zeal and courage in bringing out this noble volume on *The Generative Organs*.

This was the last of the series of Swedenborg's early treatises which were edited or translated by Dr. Wilkinson. The use, for the time being, came to a standstill. The "ocean" of natural truth, as contained in these works, had been discovered and to some limited extent navigated, but the *continent* beyond had not been reached. The scientific world kindly noticed and promptly forgot them. The New Church felt proud in their possession, but did not *use* them, and only half believed in their value. The explorers themselves, Dr. Wilkinson and his associates, discouraged, abandoned their researches. Decade after decade of silence and oblivion followed. The books "went out of the market" and soon could be obtained only at second hand, and at exorbitant prices. Still, the seed had been sown, and rested quietly and long in the bosom of the Church, until, towards the end of the century, tender blades of renewed interest began to manifest themselves. The tradition of the value of these works has survived through a series of teachers, and has increased in strength, until now the present generation demands the resurrection of the buried volumes.

Of Dr. Wilkinson's next work, a treatise on *War, Cholera, and the Ministry of Health*, (London, 1854), we are not prepared to give any opinion. It is an impassioned, eloquent appeal "to Sir Benjamin Hall and the British people" in behalf of the adoption of Homœopathy in the military hospitals and pest houses.

The Doctor's connection with the New Church, and his interest in its uses, had virtually ceased at this time. Spiritually he now entered upon a state of infestation and vastation, over which we would gladly draw the veil of silence, did historical truthfulness permit. The story of his troubles, of his captivity in the hands of the vile spirits whom he allowed to obsess and prostitute his noble mind, will certainly "point a moral," though it may not serve as an adornment to this tale.

It would seem that the hells of the ancient magicians,—the perverted posterity of the Ancient Church,—had been permitted at this time to pour forth their demoniac inhabitants into the world of spirits, in order to work their will, for a period, upon the dwellers on the earth. The minds of men were suddenly caught in a flood of magical influences. "Modern Spiritism" introduced its ghastly presence by the "Rochester rappings" and kindred phenomena. Mesmerism, clairvoyance, table-rapping, mediumship, slate-writing, spirit-drawings, communication with the dead,—all this forbidden mummary became fashionable among the intellectual circles in the Christian world, especially in America and England. The members of the New Church looked on in amaze. To some it seemed that the days of the Golden Age had come back to the earth, a grand, sudden and universal descent of the New Jerusalem in the most celestial potency. Here were verifications of Swedenborg's own intromission into the spiritual world and of his revelations concerning the nature of that world! But others, those who looked upon the Writings of the New Church as a *Divine* Revelation and not as a spirit-communication, quickly realized the fearful danger threatening the New Church in this movement. The Lord Himself had fore-warned them against it, in His ancient as well as in His new revelation. The spiritists themselves helped to clear the atmosphere by their disorderly conduct, by the inanity of their messages from the "Summer land" and by the clearly anti-christian and atheistic teachings of leading mediums, such as Andrew Jackson Davis. The flood seemed diverted into channels where it could no longer threaten the New Church.

But the tail of the ancient Dragon was not yet cast down. There suddenly arose upon the horizon the seemingly gigantic figure of a pivotal man, a young Universalist preacher from New Orleans, Thomas Lake Harris by name, a man of extraordinary talents, eloquence, brilliancy, and magnetic power of persuasion. Fired by the love of dominion over the spirits of men, wrapped in stupendous self-conceit, and armed *cap a pie* with cunning, this man became the willing medium through whom the magical spirits now sought "to deceive, if possible, the very elect." Deeply versed in all the arts of Spiritism, he became acquainted, through some means or other, with the Writings of the New Church. As

the cobra sips the dew of heaven and distils it into poison, so Harris absorbed the Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, arrayed himself without in Heavenly light, and now began a comet-like wandering across the intellectual firmament of America and Europe, a glittering course of nearly fifty years, which has but lately ended in disgrace and nameless scandal on the Pacific coast.

Appearing first in New York, Harris insinuated himself among the members of the New Church in that city as a receiver and prophet of an advanced type. Announcing himself as a successor of Swedenborg, he came with offers of new revelations, the opening of the "celestial" degree, the unfolding of the "celestial" sense of the Word, the restoration of "internal respiration" and communion—not with mere spirits, but with guaranteed angels of light. Having attracted a number of devotees, after creating a vast amount of turmoil and trouble, he next flitted across the Atlantic, lectured to enormous audiences in London and other cities in England, had a phenomenal success wherever he appeared, attached men of intellect, position and wealth to his triumphant chariot, and so fascinated some of the most prominent members of the New Church that they lost the possession of their common sense, their reason and their faith.

Among these hypnotized victims we find our beloved friend, Dr. Wilkinson, who, it would seem, must have been thus far rather the enthusiastic follower of Swedenborg the man, than a disciple of the Lord in His Second Coming. We are happy to be able to say that we possess but few data of his connection with Harris, but such as they are they exhibit him, at this period, a full-fledged spiritualist. Thus we find him, in the summer of 1855 on a visit to Dr. Kahl, at Lund, describing to him the communications which had lately been received, through an English medium, from the "Icelandic heaven." The Mala herself had told how her celebrated song, the Voluspa, "the Icelandic Word," had been given to her in ancient times through inspiration from the Lord. (See *New Jerusalem Magazine*, Boston, vol. 28, p. 433.)

We next find him as the misguided author of a pamphlet entitled *The Homoeopathic Principle applied to Insanity. A Proposal to treat Lunacy by Spiritualism*. (London and Boston, 1857.) The public is assured, here, that "Spiritualism is one of the Lord's plants for curing insanity." In certain cases it has

been known to produce insanity, but the fault has not been then with the spirits, but with the disordered organism of the medium. "*Similia similibus curantur.*" Hence, introduce the practices of spirit-drawing, table-rapping, etc., into the madhouses, and these things will prove outlets for the spirits who have produced the insanity, and they will leave the patient whole and sound. We do not know if the proposed remedy was ever tried, but can imagine it would make a Bedlam worse confounded. At any rate, it does not appeal to us as sound Homœopathy, the prescribed doses amounting to a raw tincture. The hair of a medium, highly potentized, might be more effective.

A most painful task still remains: to notice, as briefly as possible, a volume of "poems," which Dr. Wilkinson published in the same unhappy year, under the title of *Improvisations from the Spirit*. (London, Swedenborg Society [!], 1857.) The only redeeming feature about this small but direful volume of damnable doggerel, is, that it was *not* written by our poor friend, the Doctor, but professedly by spirits,—surely a horde of idiots, who had taken bodily possession of a fevered brain in order to pour out upon suffering humanity the most nauseating rhymed nonsense and profanity that ever was heard or seen.

It makes us shudder to think that a man, professedly under the influence of such spirits, was appointed, in the same year, to revise Mr. Clowes' translation of the work on *The Divine Providence*. But the Swedenborg Society, at this period, had fallen into the hands of the spiritists. The ludicrous and blasphemous ravings of Harris were openly exposed for sale in the windows of the Society's Book Room and advertised in the organs of the Church, nay in the volumes of Swedenborg himself. The Committee was packed with Harrisites, the treasurer and the secretary were fanatical followers of the American medium, and the bold attempt was finally made, by means of bought proxies, to outvote the New Churchmen in the Society, and turn the organization, its funds and real-estate, into a distinctly spiritistic institution. In these scandalous proceedings Dr. Wilkinson, however, took no part, but withdrew from the body about the year 1860, before the final judgment came. How long the Doctor remained under the influence of Harris—to whom he was as a sort of "court-physician"—is uncertain, but we know that in 1868 his

interest in the uses of the New Church had revived, and that by 1875, his mind had finally been set free from the clouds and meshes of spiritism. The record of his struggles for light and freedom has not been made known but his repentance was open and manly. Few have come out of Spiritism without lasting scars, but Dr. Wilkinson's later works bear no evidence of magical remains. The story of his exile among the swine and the husks is no reproach to him, for "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

Emerson, in his oft-quoted references to Dr. Wilkinson, speaks of the latter as "the annotator of Fourier." On the other hand Mr. James Speirs, in his interesting sketch of our author, in *Morning Light* for November 18th, 1899, denies any connection between the Doctor and Fourierism. Now, while there is no evidence that Dr. Wilkinson ever "annotated" any of the works of Charles Fourier, or wrote any special treatise on the peculiar system of the *phalanges*, yet it is certain that his impressionable mind, at one period of his life, was much attracted by the brilliant fallacies of the French sociologist. Thus, in a letter to the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, of Boston, in 1842, he draws attention to certain apparent parallelisms between Swedenborg and Fourier, and believes that the latter "must have been a student of Swedenborg's Writings, or have received, without perverting it, a large measure of influent truth" (*N. J. M.*, vol. 15, p. 358). In another letter, in 1843, he describes Fourierism as valuable, in its speculative aspect, on account of its application of the laws of Order, Series, and Groups, but does not consider it a safe guide in theology, nor in any higher than economic order, or natural association and science. The more internal or philosophical part of the system he distinctly rejects, together with Fourier's notions on the transmigration of souls, the transmutation of sex, the "conscious life" of planets, suns, and of the material universe. (*Ibid*, vol. 17, p. 155.) It would seem that Dr. Wilkinson, during the dark "middle ages" of his life, went even further in his acceptance of Fourier's vagaries, but how far we do not know. The editor of the *Boston Magazine* observes, in 1855: "We do not know whether Dr. Wilkinson regards himself now as a receiver of the doctrines taught by Swedenborg, or not; we have supposed that he had adopted very

fully the views of Fourier, and consequently had left those of Swedenborg, as we regard the two as utterly irreconcilable and, indeed, antagonistic" (*Ibid*, vol. 28, p. 433).

The system of Fourier does, indeed, possess a certain superficial similarity to some of the laws which govern the organization of the societies of heaven. There is an apparent recognition of the doctrines of use, of free determination, of association according to uses, of harmonious co-operation, etc., which would seem to afford a solution to many pressing social problems. Many other members of the New Church, beside Dr. Wilkinson, were fascinated by the theories of Fourier. Works were published, in America, to prove that his system would indeed establish the "New Earth" which is to descend out of the New Heaven, and the flourishing New Church society in Canton, Ill., went so far as to establish itself as a "phalanstery" or communistic institution on the plan of Fourier's,—with most disastrous results. The true inwardness of the system soon revealed itself. The "reforms of society,"—purely artificial, proved worse than the old "forms," and the hideous though hidden skeleton, "free-love," when discovered, caused the system to be banished forever from the realms of the New Jerusalem. Thus also with Dr. Wilkinson; Fourierism, no less than Spiritualism, was at last found indigestible, and our friend finally emerged from it all, having sacrificed perhaps an offending right hand or eye, but free henceforth for the service of a single master, the Divine Truth, the Lord Alone in His Second Advent.

The period of Dr. Wilkinson's gradual recovery is marked by an absence of activity in the fields of religion or philosophy, and by a strict devotion to the uses of his profession. During some ten years, from 1857 to 1867, there is an almost entire absence of data in his literary career, broken only by the appearance of a few short treatises on the subject of medicines and sanitation.

The year 1868 marks the beginning of the second period of his activity in the uses of the New Church. Through his interest in Icelandic lore he had become at this time intimately associated with Mr. Jon A. Hjaltalin, then connected with the Icelandic department in the British Museum, and afterwards principal of the College in Reikiavik. From this association, Mr. Hjaltalin became deeply interested in the Doctrines of the New Church, and,

with Dr. Wilkinson's assistance, performed the difficult task of translating the *Divine Love and Wisdom* into Icelandic. This volume, the first of Swedenborg's works to appear in the most ancient of living European tongues, was published at Copenhagen, 1868. Dr. Wilkinson, shortly afterwards, was elected a member of the Icelandic Society of Copenhagen. In the year 1865 he had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

After a silence of many years he appeared, in 1876, as the author of another monumental work, *On Human Science, Good and Evil, and its Works, and on Divine Revelation and its Works and Sciences*. (Philadelphia. Lippincott. pp. 590.) Though less brilliant, perhaps, than the work on *The Human Body and its Connection with Man*, it is more mature and safe, more distinctively of the New Church in its quality, and hence of more enduring value. It has been characterized by a competent judge, Dr. R. L. Tafel, as a work, "in which a merely sensual science is arraigned before the judgment-seat of God, and where its shortcomings and pretensions are mercilessly exposed." Nor is it of a merely negative and destructive character, but clearly and succinctly unfolds the principles upon which the future science of the New Church must be based. It is truly invaluable as a text book of principles and methods for the scholars of the Church. Not the falsities, only, of modern Science are here attacked, but especially its evils, as evidenced, for instance, in the cruelty and tyranny of vivisection, as practiced on animals and men, showing that such practices, in themselves evil and fallacious, can only result in a false science and the destruction of conscience in the community. Lack of space forbids our dwelling at any length on the merits of this great work. It contains, in short,—“a full and complete statement of the leading Doctrines of the New Church in their application of modern thought and their bearing upon the pursuits of science. All these topics are treated with a freshness, raciness and vigor that will quicken the thoughts even of the old students of the Doctrines. For sharp distinction, clear statement, forcible utterance, and close reasoning, they are seldom equalled, . . . and through all there runs a loyalty to the truths of the New Church, that will be exceedingly grateful to the members of the Church, and excite the respect and admiration of all.” (Rev. S. S. Seward in the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, 1877, p. 81.)

As might have been expected, the work on *Human Science and Divine Revelation* attracted but little attention in the learned world, but Dr. Wilkinson now descended into an arena where his voice was heard to more effect, enabling him to perform a most important use to his country and, indirectly, to oppressed humanity in general. He now arose as probably the most powerful champion in England against the legalized despotism of Compulsory Vaccination, directing against it, in the name of freedom, justice, true science and the public health, a series of *Vaccination Tracts*, fourteen in number, which were widely distributed and which powerfully contributed to the growth of a public sentiment, now victorious, against this malignant form of medical paternalism.

The last twenty years of Dr. Wilkinson's life were devoted almost exclusively to the distinctive literary work of the New Church. The praise of the world and its glory, the foreign ideals and deities which formerly had infested his mind,—all these seemed now to have lost their charms, and though his heart was beating as warmly as ever for the external reformation and spiritual elevation of the race, he had come to realize that there is nothing to hope from the world, from the old Christian Church as such, but that the only practical and possible path to individual and racial salvation lies in the conscious reception of the Doctrines of the New Church. These Doctrines were henceforth his only light, and he no longer looked upon Swedenborg as the *discoverer* of these truths, as a sort of "spiritual Columbus," but beyond the human instrument the features of the Divine Master appeared to him in ever clearer and more glorious light. As he said to a friend, towards the end of his life, "If I had my literary life to begin again, I would not argue about the Doctrines of the New Church at all. I would simply say: *these things are Divine truths.*"

And this is exactly what he did say in all his later works. As the truth became more and more a part of his very life he became less and less argumentative and more calmly assertive, not of his own opinions, but of the actual truth of the Heavenly Doctrines. In these his mind henceforth found a sabbath-rest, and his life seems to have flowed on to the end in the joyous tranquillity of innocent wisdom.

This peacefulness of mind and singleness of purpose resulted in still greater activity for the cause which he loved, nearly every year being marked by the appearance of one or more volumes from his pen, or by valuable and inspiring articles in the journals of the Church, especially in the *Intellectual Repository* and its successor, *The New Church Magazine*. Among his contributions to this latter journal, we would call attention, particularly, to his eloquent appeal for the reproduction of the manuscript of Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary* (*N. C. Mag.*, 1886, p. 506), an appeal which re-awakened the New Church to its duty in preserving all of Swedenborg's remaining manuscripts. His interesting review of the *Life of Jesper Swedberg*, by Professor Tottie, of Upsala (*Ibid.*, 1889, p. 49), is also worthy of special mention among his many other articles.

Having returned to all his *premiers amours*, he now began again to take an active interest in the important work of the Swedenborg Society, and in 1882 became a member of the governing "Committee," on which occasion he delivered a very interesting and valuable address on *Swedenborg's Doctrines and the Translations of His Works* (afterwards printed separately as a pamphlet).

This was followed, in 1883, by a new version of Swedenborg's work on *The Divine Love and Wisdom*, the joint production of Dr. R. L. Tafel and Dr. Wilkinson. The latter, however, was dissatisfied with the character of this collaboration, and therefore, two years later, brought out a version of his own which differs quite radically from the edition of 1883; it is more literal, perhaps, but rather less readable and intelligible.

During the same year, 1885, Dr. Wilkinson published two other volumes, the first a new edition of his *Biography of Swedenborg*, thoroughly revised, enlarged, and much improved, and the other a big book of nearly five hundred pages, entitled *The Greater Origins and Issues of Life and Death*.

In attempting any sort of a brief review of this, or any other of the subsequent works of Dr. Wilkinson, we cannot refrain from expressing our sympathy with the cry of despair which has been wrung from all his past reviewers. While his tender heart embraced all classes and conditions of men and beasts, his own prospective reviewers seem to have been alone excluded from his com-

passion. His books are, one and all, most difficult to describe, and still more difficult to criticise. They deal with so many different subjects, in so transcendental a style, and with such a sublime disregard of method and arrangement, that the unfortunate reviewer is lost in bewilderment as to the leading and differentiating theme of each book and as to the exact meaning of some of the more profound sentences.

Thus, in the *Greater Issues*, the author deals with nearly every subject under the sun, in rapid and seemingly disconnected succession, yet always disarming the critic by the self-evident value of his multitudinous suggestions, applications, and interpretations. His mind is like the beam of a revolving search-light, which brilliantly illumines most distant darknesses, yet the next moment it may be gone, to reappear miles away. This peculiarity must serve as the excuse for our conscious vagueness in the account of his later works.

Dr. Wilkinson's next work, on *Revelation, Mythology, Correspondence* (London, 1887), is a series of notes, rather than an elaborate work, but is of especial value as a first attempt to bring the whole subject of Mythology under the light of the New Church. Many extracts from the Writings of Swedenborg on the subject of the legends and fables of the Ancients, are here brought together, accompanied with suggestive thoughts and tentative interpretations. But the greatest value of the books lies, perhaps, in the author's searching criticism of the prevailing materialistic method of interpreting the faiths of the ancient world.

The same subject is continued, but more definitely, in the next work, *Oannes according to Berosus. A study in the Church of the Ancients*. (London, 1888.) This is probably the masterpiece among Dr. Wilkinson's later writings, and is a truly valuable attempt to apply the science of correspondences to the systematic interpretation of one of the legends from the Ancient Church. The theme is the grand story of creation which has been preserved in the fragments from Berosus, the Chaldean priest, and which has been filled out, corrected, and corroborated by the newly opened literature of ancient Babylonia. The Doctor proceeds to unfold the inner sense of the myth, discovering in it an account of the establishment of the Ancient Church. In his application he makes

a mistake, we think, for the legend appears to us to describe, instead, the establishment of the Church of the Golden Age, the *Most Ancient* or *Adamic* dispensation; but in his treatment and method he is nevertheless most interesting and suggestive, opening up on every side magnificent vistas into the long-closed mysteries of hoary antiquity.

Ever busy and versatile, he soon afterwards appeared with a volume on a totally different subject, entitled *The Soul is form, and doth the Body make*, being chapters in psychology, and dealing particularly with the correspondence and connection of the heart and the lungs with the will and understanding of man (London, 1890). In his usual rambling style, burdened with a multitude of strange words and expressions, yet always fascinating and suggestive, the writer seeks to call popular attention to the merits of Swedenborg's physiological and psychological works. Of special value is his treatment of the bronchial arteries and tubes, and the coronary arteries of the heart, as illustrating, correspondentially, the subjection of the human will under the purifying control of the rational understanding.

Still another field of thought is touched upon in the text work, *The African and the True Christian Religion his Magna Charta: a study in the Writings of Swedenborg* (London, 1892), where the author collects together, and makes a brave attempt at digesting, the many passages in the Writings which treat of the African race, its celestial characteristics, and its future position in the Church of the New Jerusalem. The subject of slavery is dealt with at some length, and Dr. Wilkinson shows, incidentally, that the great Anti-slavery movement in Great Britain owed its origin directly and distinctly to the agitation of Nordenskjöld and Wadström, the Swedish New Churchmen. The volume is dedicated to Dr. E. W. Blyden, the Liberian minister to England, and followed as a sequel to Dr. Blyden's work on *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*. Some of Dr. Wilkinson's theories in this book are problematical to say the least; as for instance his sanguine hopes of the American negro, as the future New Church missionary to Africa. The Writings of Swedenborg distinctly encourage the belief that the conversion of Africa will result, not from evangelization from without, but from an intrinsic development among the negroes in their own continent.

In *Epidemic Man and his Visitations* (London, 1893), the author strikes another telling blow at the modern scientific iniquities of inoculation and pest-houses. The "Epidemic Man" is a representative personification of contagious diseases in general and of cholera and "la grippe" in particular. Many other subjects, rather foreign to the issue, are treated of, and the Doctor goes quite out of his way in order to attack the United States and their institutions, which he does with unnecessary bitterness.

The New Jerusalem and the Old Jerusalem (London, 1894), consists to a great extent of extracts from the Writings, on the subject of the "place and service of the Jewish Church among the eons of Revelations." It is very loosely constructed, somewhat difficult to comprehend, and is, in our opinion, the least interesting of the Doctor's many writings.

The Combats and Victories of Jesus Christ (London, 1895) is a distinctly theological work, dealing with the most sublime of all doctrines: the Glorification of the Human which the Lord assumed in the world, the nature of the maternal heredity, the mysteries of Divine Accommodation, the character of the temptation-combats, and the results of the victories of the God-man. Dr. Wilkinson's theology may not be considered most definite or systematic, but it is made living, attractive, and instructive by the child-like reverence and the intense affection which shine through it. In the face of this devotion, certain theological blemishes fade into insignificance, and the critic himself is apt to forget his disagreeable renal functions.

But few other works remain to be noticed. In the bright little tract, *Swedenborg among the Doctors. A letter to Robert T. Cooper, M. D.* (London, 1895), Dr. Wilkinson appears again, and now for the last time, in his ancient armour as the champion of Swedenborg's Science and Philosophy, and this in spite of his introductory declaration, "Now, I do not accept Swedenborg as, in any sense, 'a scientist.'" In interesting and delightful style, the author then proceeds to differentiate between the actual "scientist," whose one end and aim is the science itself, and Swedenborg, whose single aim was Truth. A summary of the Doctrines of the New Church is then presented in their relation to the whole subject of physiological and medical science, and the Doctor ends by

beseeking his brother Homœopathist to read the theological Writings of Swedenborg before the anatomical ones,—a word of true wisdom, from one well qualified to speak.

When Dr. Wilkinson next appears in literature, it is in the character of a teacher of political ethics. Addressing himself to the great unheeding world in a book with the peculiar title, *The Affections of Armed Powers: a Plea for a School of Little Nations*, (London, 1897), he brings the light of the New Revelation to bear upon the modern issues of international politics, suggesting especially the introduction of the idea of *conscience* into the game of the Great Powers. It is to England, especially, that the author looks for a regeneration of politics, and to the New Church for the regeneration of England.

In *The Book of the Edda called Voluspa* (London, 1897), our "grand old man" returns to one of the most favored themes of his earlier years, the magnificent mythology of ancient Scandinavia, which seems to have preserved the leading features of pre-historic theology longer and in greater purity than any other of the ancient mythologies. Dr. Wilkinson's poetic mind kindles at the thought of Swedenborg, the Northman, having been the instrument of revealing the key which is to open the ancient temple in which his ancestors worshiped. This key, the science of correspondences, our friend now applies to the noblest of the Icelandic legends, the Voluspa, or prophetic song of Vala, the seeress; and then proceeds to interpret this ancient document, line for line, and word for word, just as Swedenborg interpreted *Genesis* or *Exodus*. He thus shows that the song, in its "internal sense," treats prophetically of the fall of the Christian Church, the Last Judgment, and the final establishment of a New Heaven and a New Earth.

While we are thoroughly convinced that the wonderful story of the Ragnarok, or the "Twilight of the Gods," bears within it this meaning, and cannot possibly mean anything else, yet Dr. Wilkinson's imagination certainly runs away with his judgment when he claims for the Voluspa a verbal Divine inspiration, a position as actually an integral portion of the Ancient Word. On the contrary, it dates distinctly from a time when the Ancient Church had become perverted into polytheism, and it cannot have been anything more than a legend, a remarkably clear reflection from the Ancient Word itself. Nevertheless, the author's interpretation of

Scandinavian Mythology in general, and of the Vala's song in particular, is nothing less than sublime.

We need to exercise the same caution, and are forced to admit the same feeling of admiration, when reading the very last of Dr. Wilkinson's works, *Isis and Osiris in the Book of Respirations* (London, 1899). The central and the grandest theme of Egyptian Mythology, the story of Osiris, is here interpreted as a prophetic hymn of the Ancient Word, describing in its internal sense, the Advent of the Lord to the world, His natural development, spiritual combats, and final Glorification. While hesitating before accepting the Osiris legend as word for word a part of the Ancient Revelation, and while doubting the absolute accuracy of the interpretation as long as we cannot be certain of the integrity or inspiration of the text, the impression remains that the interpretation is *substantially* correct, and that Dr. Wilkinson's parting words to his grateful readers are in themselves a prophecy of the glorious things from the Church of the Ancients, to which the Church of the New Jerusalem some day will fall the heir.

In closing we quote from Mr. James Speirs' account of Dr. Wilkinson in *Morning Light*:

"Dr. Wilkinson's last work had been completely passed through the press, and was in the bookbinder's hands, before his death. . . . He had expressed the hope to a friend that he might live to complete it. The maxim 'man is immortal until his work be done' was quoted to him. But he gave a quaint turn to it by replying, 'No, man is mortal until then; it is then that he becomes immortal.'

"His illness was very short, only lasting for a day and a half. And up to that time his intellect was as keen, and his memory apparently as perfect as they had ever been; nor had his interest in public affairs, such as the present political outlook, in any degree abated. He passed away on October 18th, 1899, at the ripe age of eighty-seven years."

Our brief sketch calls for no final panegyrics. As a man we knew but little of Dr. Wilkinson. His writings speak for themselves. What the judgment of the future will be, we cannot tell, but the mark which he has made upon the collective thought of the New Church will not soon be effaced. To the coming generation, at least, as to the present one, his works will continue to be an education, his intelligence and love an inspiration.





